The Middlebury Campus

VOL. CXXII, No. 11 | MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, JANUARY 16, 2025 | middleburycampus.com

Architects launch design process for new museum to replace Battell Hall

COURTESY PHOTO / ALLIED WORKS

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Managing Editor

A laboratory. A center for objects and ideas. A cornerstone of an arts agora. Middlebury's living room. This is the vision faculty, museum directors and architects have for the new museum that is planned to open on campus in the fall of 2028. The museum will replace Battell Hall, which will be demolished in favor of the new first year dorm on the north end of Battell Beach.

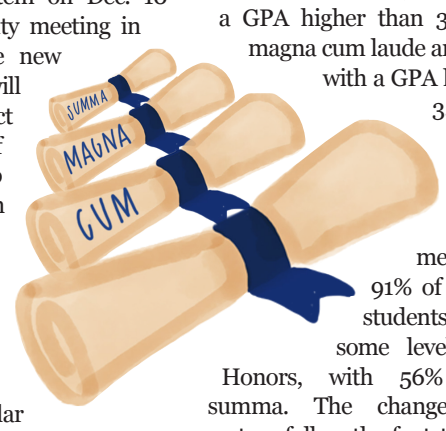
On Wednesday, Jan. 15 and Thursday, Jan. 16, architects Chelsea Grassinger and Hannah Bacon from Allied Works — the chosen

Continued on Page 2

FACULTY VOTE TO RESTRICT GRADUATION HONORS

By MAGGIE BRYAN & EVAN WEISS
Senior News Editor & News Editor

Faculty voted 79 to 15 in favor of a proposed change to the college's Latin honors system on Dec. 10 at a plenary faculty meeting in Wilson Hall. The new honors system will drastically restrict the number of graduates who receive Latin honors, eliminate the Valedictorian and Salutatorian titles, and remove the semester-based College Scholar distinction.



Starting in July 2025, Middlebury will allocate honors based on a percentage, rather than a GPA cutoff. The top two percent of students will receive summa cum laude (what would have been 21 students for the class of 2024), the top 15% will receive magna cum laude (102 for the class of 2024) and the top 30% will receive cum laude (116 for the class of 2024). There will be no changes to departmental honors.

In the current system, students with a GPA higher than 3.90 receive the highest Latin Honors rank of summa cum laude, students with a GPA higher than 3.75 receive magna cum laude and students with a GPA higher than 3.50 receive cum laude. Last year, this meant that 91% of graduating students received some level of Latin Honors, with 56% receiving summa. The changes to the system follow the footsteps of peer institutions including Williams College, Carleton College and Bowdoin College.

Much of the meeting's discussion revolved around the larger issue of grade inflation at the college,

Continued on Page 3

LOCAL

Middlebury police investigating possible gunfire incident near Hannaford

By MANDY BERGHELA
Senior Local Editor

Last Saturday night, the Middlebury Police Department responded to reports of gunfire behind the Hannaford Supermarket in town. No injuries were reported; six minors and one adult were detained and subsequently released pending an ongoing investigation

At approximately 11:20 p.m., the Middlebury police were requested to survey the area behind Hannaford for a vehicle which had been involved in a shooting in a home at St. Albans, Vt. earlier that night, according to a press release on Jan. 13 from the police department.

"We started receiving 911 phone calls of potential gunfire, so Middlebury police investigated," Middlebury Police Chief Jason Coveys told The Campus in an interview on Tuesday.

"I have to stress that most that this is still a work in progress, so the investigation that is ongoing now is to determine the actual physical evidence and digital evidence, so that we can piece together so we know what happened so we know what criminal charge would be appropriate, which was not readily apparent that night," Covey added.

Officers were initially notified of gunfire behind

Continued on Page 3

COLLEGE IMPLEMENTS NEW STUDY ABROAD SEMESTER ASSIGNMENT POLICY

PHOEBE AN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Sunderland Language Center on College Street houses the study abroad offices.

By PHOEBE AN
Staff Writer

Following several years of imbalanced enrollment for its popular study abroad programs, Middlebury has adopted a new system that will assign students who wish to study away for one semester to either the fall or spring semester. The college will give some weight to student preferences and academic needs, but the change is intended to correct uneven enrollment numbers after an increasing number of students have been choosing to go abroad during the spring.

By Nov. 1, all students wishing to study abroad for the 2025–2026 academic year had to complete an application including their preferred semester and location to study abroad, along with their academic or other rationale for choosing it. The week of Nov. 18, students who applied received emails with their study abroad assignments for the following year.

Prior to this year, there was no formal process of applying to a specific semester to study abroad. Noel Schlageter '26.5 applied to study in Valdivia, Chile for the fall semester of 2024 and the only approval he needed was from his major advisors.

"The instructor approved my study abroad program through an online portal along with the study abroad advisor. However, this was throughout the study abroad application process and never felt formalized. It never felt like a conversation, just a box to check," Schlageter said.

Associate Dean of International Programs Liz Ross explained the college's intentions behind developing an assignment process.

"For Middlebury, a small, residential liberal arts college with a large participation rate in off-campus study, it is very important to have a balanced enrollment between the fall and spring semester," she wrote in an email to The Campus. Ross added that this balance is crucial for on-campus academic programs, housing and student activities to maintain quality programming.

The office recently sent an email to the student body about the advantages of studying abroad in the fall semester. They described benefits such as students being able to more evenly split their time at Middlebury and build deeper relationships after study abroad rather than before, a less rushed process to acquire a student visa, flexibility in extending their study abroad if desired and less competition in program applications, among other reasons.

Spring has traditionally been the preferred semester for studying abroad: projections from 2023 predicted 130 more students would be studying abroad in the spring of the following academic year than in the fall. However, the form of intent students had to submit this year justifying their plans informed the office of all incoming study abroad demand so that they could plan accordingly.

"If a student does not have a compelling rationale for studying away in the

Continued on Page 2

NEWS

Guest professors bring a breadth of expertise to J-Term courses

By ELLA CALLAHAN

▸ PAGE 3

LOCAL

The Sheldon Museum earns $650,000 grant to help fund future programs

By DECLAN RICHARDS

▸ PAGE 4

OPINIONS

New Latin honors system is right step but won't fix grade inflation

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

My weight loss journey

By JOSHUA GARSON

▸ PAGE 5

ARTS & CULTURE

In "Proof of Life," variety is the spice

By CATHERINE GOODRICH

Reel Critic: Nosferatu

By NORAH KHAN

▸ PAGE 7

SPORTS

Squash teams build momentum on the road

By TING CUI

Women's basketball trounces Trinity, Wesleyan

By JACK McGUIRE

▸ PAGE 10

MULTIMEDIA

Painting Professionals: A conversation with Brian Cirmo

By JUNE SU

▸ PAGE 12

ARCHITECTS LAUCH DESIGN PROCESS FOR NEW MUESEUM TO REPLACE BATTELL HALL

Continued from Page 1

architecture firm to tackle the project — are on campus to launch the design process with the fuel of a conglomerate of voices and ideas for the new building. They are scheduled to tour the current museum and the new museum's future site, consult with a variety of knowledgeable groups and host feedback sessions to acquire the insight they need to move forward. On Jan. 16, they will host a brief presentation and open listening session in the Johnson Memorial Building's Pavilion from 1:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. to answer questions and hear students' appeals. The architects will return on Feb. 19 and 20 to continue the design process.

The museum will occupy approximately 35,000 square feet at the site of the soon-to-be-demolished Battell Hall, which is 51,285 square feet. The building will nearly double the size of the current exhibition and teaching spaces located in the Mahaney Arts Center (MAC), which occupies about 15,000 square feet. The new museum will cost an estimated $50 million to design and construct, of which approximately $35 million has already been raised. The design will be completed by the end of March 2026 and construction will begin in 2027, to be completed in 2028.

The Middlebury College Museum of Art's collection of almost 7,000 works will be relocated to exhibition spaces in the new building. The museum will also house multi-purpose classrooms and flexible "object study spaces," interactive spaces that allow students across departments to learn through hands-on experience with the artifacts, according to people directly involved in the design process. Several hundred students visited Special Collections with their classes in 2024 to incorporate visual culture into their learning processes — a practice the object study spaces will aim to foster.

The core team managing the project consists of five people: Richard Saunders, who will move from his role as museum director to chief new museum strategist, Principal Architect Chelsea Grassinger from Allied Works, Associate Professor of Architecture and owner of McLeod Architects John McLeod, Associate Vice President for Operations Mike Moser, and John Benzinger, who is a project executive at Skanska USA, the construction company for the project. When Saunders officially begins his new role on March 1, Professor of History of Art and Architecture Katy Smith Abbott will take over as the museum's interim director.

The building will function as an academic hub as well as a student center where students, faculty, staff and community members can stop to buy coffee, casually study and informally meet, according to Saunders and McLeod.

McLeod anticipates working with Allied Works to design a space that is meant to be highly interactive, especially considering its central, high-traffic location only a stone's throw away from other essential arts buildings on campus, namely Wright Memorial Theater and Johnson Memorial Building. A rich aesthetic connection between the interior and exterior space, natural light, appealing views of campus, comfortable furniture and a variety of sizes and types of areas for both intimate meetings and larger events are all features he envisions would curate a magnetic space for students.

"It's not your traditional, conventional, old-fashioned museum where a bunch of objects are carefully, you know, stored away and someone decides what gets displayed and exhibited," McLeod said in an interview with The Campus.

COURTESY PHOTO/ MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

The back entrance of the Middlebury College Museum of Art, where the college's current collection of almost 7,000 works is currently housed. The collection will move to the new museum in the fall of 2028.

TOM NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Battell Hall will be torn down this year to make room for the new museum.

McLeod also sees possibilities for designing the museum space to accommodate objects that would serve a variety of departments, including the sciences, such as biological specimens. The college owns a number of natural history collections that are currently housed in BiHall but could be partially incorporated into the new building.

"The idea is to connect someone from art history to somebody from physics or biology and have those ideas intersect," Saunders said. "There is no building [on campus] that I know of where that excitement happens now."

The idea for a new museum was born a few years ago in conversations about centralizing the arts on campus and the increasingly innovative ways in which faculty wanted to use the museum's collections to teach, according to Saunders. The college commissioned a study by Selldorf Architects, an architecture firm based in New York City, to generate ideas for a potential structure and budget for a new museum. The firm proposed a $100 million budget, which the college administration has moved to cut in half due to financial constraints.

The location was chosen with its centrality and the inevitable demolition of Battell Hall in mind. Some concerns have been raised about the limited parking in proximity to the new museum — therefore limiting public access to the collection — but Saunders noted that the new location is intended to prioritize student access and that most college museums do not offer the luxurious number of close parking spaces currently offered at the MAC.

Allied Works is a small firm based in Portland, Oregon and Brooklyn, New York with experience designing college and university museums and was selected through a competitive process by a committee composed of the Board of Trustees, administrators and some faculty members this fall. The image in the college's recent announcement of the new museum is not an official design, but was one of the renderings Allied Works presented to the committee to evoke their vision.

On campus this week, the architects and core project team are touring the current museum in the Mahaney Arts Center (MAC) to familiarize themselves with its collection, visiting the future site of the new museum and meeting with several groups on campus to inform the beginning of the design process. This includes faculty with pedagogical interests in the space, the college's senior leadership group, Landscape Horticulturist Tim Parsons, students from the Sustainability Solutions Lab (SSL) and a number of others.

Professor of History of Art & Architecture Eliza Garrison and Associate Professor of History of Art & Architecture Erin Sassin agreed that a larger, more flexible museum and teaching spaces are long overdue. They are looking forward to a more concise fusion between Art History classes and the Architectural Studies spaces in Johnson, which could allow them to incorporate more exhibition design into their curricula.

"I think we're really excited about a variety of spaces associated with the museum beyond our classroom spaces — places that can be sort of messy and experimental and laboratory, places where you can look at works of art to sort of break down the barriers of formality," Sassin said.

Garrison, Sassin and other Art History faculty are among those meeting with the architects this week in hopes that they can have a prominent voice in conversations about the plans moving forward, as they work with students to curate the bulk of the current museum's exhibitions. Limited museum hours and personnel have restricted how much they can engage their classes with the current museum, and they think the new museum will be fertile ground to dissolve some of this rigidity.

"The dream is a space where you can, if you're in a seminar, for example, and you're talking about a particular thing, that you can go to the museum with your students, just kind of spur the moment, walk across the hall and be able to talk about a particular object," Garrison said.

They also believe that their faculty offices should move to the new museum to remain in close proximity to the spaces in which they teach — though Saunders mentioned that the high cost per square footage in the building could mean the space will be dedicated to other purposes.

"So much of what happens intellectually and academically happens informally," Sassin said. "It happens by the water coolers. It happens in the spaces that aren't necessarily in the classroom but adjacent to the classroom outside of faculty offices where people are hanging out."

Incoming museum interim director Katy Smith Abbott shared her sentiments about student access and inclusivity in the new museum being a priority.

"I think that [the] notion of student ownership and students really feeling this is a place where I don't just belong, but I am contributing and I have something to bring to this that will make the spaces and the opportunities and the exhibits richer," Smith Abbott said.

In the approximately three and a half years before the new museum opens, Smith Abbott will have to carefully consider which items to acquire with the annual budget dedicated to collections and how they may fit into the new space.

In the coming months, museum staff will give tours of the museum's current space in the MAC to the chairs of programs in theater, dance and performing arts to invite them to think about how it could be used in the future, according to Saunders and Smith Abbott.

The incoming Feb class of 2028.5 will be the first wave of students on campus to see the new museum come alive, in their very last semester. In a college student's four-year on-campus lifespan, that day may feel eons away — but for the architects, administrators, faculty, staff and numerous others dedicating themselves to the project, it is worth the wait.

"We need to kind of think ahead to like what our department might look like in 15, 20 years," Garrison said. "The spaces that are part of that museum are really going to have to grow right with our curriculum and with the kinds of students who are going to be here in a decade."

COLLEGE IMPLEMENTS NEW STUDY ABROAD SEMESTER POLICY

Continued from Page 1

spring semester, they may be reassigned to the fall," Ross wrote, adding that a preference for a certain semester to coordinate studying abroad with friends would not be a valid reason to avoid reassignment.

Ross emphasized that the Office of International Programs considered a variety of factors when making assignments, including whether a student needed another semester of language instruction before going abroad, or if that prerequisite would be fulfilled by attending Middlebury Language Schools over the summer.

If students were displeased with their assignment, they had the opportunity to submit an appeal with their justification for doing so throughout December, without being guaranteed the opportunity to switch. Final applications to study abroad are due Feb. 1.

Nearly 60% of the typical graduating class reports having studied abroad, making the new system a significant development that led some students to reflect on the impact it would have on their time at Middlebury

Ella Powers '27 plans on studying in New Zealand and completed the form of intent to study away with a request to go in the spring. The program they applied for only operates during the spring, but despite this rationale, Powers was initially assigned to study abroad in the fall.

"It was a bit more complicated since I had to go through the appeal process and I was not able to meet in person with an advisor. However, after emailing, I was able to get my assignment switched to the correct term," Powers said.

The deadline to submit appeals was Dec. 1, two weeks after assignments were allocated, and students were notified of their appeal decision by Dec. 9. Although the appeal process resolved the situation, Powers found the process to be detrimental for students trying to plan out their time at Middlebury.

"I think the new policy adds an extra layer of stress for students who want to study abroad. Students plan ahead on where they want to go and when they want to go based on their needs. When the school then assigns a term that does not match with these plans, it can create more work and stress for the students," she said.

For students intending to study abroad for both semesters, like Abeera Riaz '27, who plans to spend time in Jordan and Morocco next year, the process was more straightforward.

"My assignment process was definitely easier than most of the people I knew. Since I wanted academic year, I knew it would be highly likely to get what I wanted," Riaz said.

Given that this is the first year this new system is in place, its long-term effects on student life on campus and while studying abroad remain to be seen.

GUEST PROFESSORS BRING A BREADTH OF EXPERTISE TO J-TERM COURSES

By ELLA CALLAHAN
Contributing Writer

In a typical semester, Middlebury hosts no shortage of impressive faculty to teach across a wide range of disciplines. However, Middlebury's J-Term course offerings present students with an exceptional opportunity to discover unique classes often taught by guest professors with specialized real-world experience and backgrounds that often stray from the academia-centered careers of typical professors. The presence and guidance of these visiting professors allow students to visualize career paths across a multitude of fields, learning and exploring in new ways.

Will Gusakov, a professional timber framer who grew up in Vermont, is teaching "From Forest to Frame," a class that focuses on timber framing, with the mission of creating a timber farm stand for Mary Hogan Elementary School's expanding garden education program. Along with local projects, Gusakov is particularly renowned for his work as one of the few Americans on the team to rebuild Notre Dame Cathedral's medieval roof frames in 2023 after they were destroyed by the destructive structural fire that broke out in 2019. The college invited him to teach a J-Term class after he gave an on-campus lecture about his work on the cathedral last February.

In alignment with highlighting local experience, Gusakov noted that one of his favorite parts of teaching this course has been showing students the connection between architecture, people, traditions and cultures.

"This is a world often neglected in academia... bringing that kind of culture and those kinds of traditions to life and trying to highlight some of those connections is something that I'm pretty passionate about," Gusakov said.

His ultimate goal is for students to feel more connected to and empowered by their abilities to create and that they find personal inspiration and engagement in the topic.

"This class [is providing] the chance to work more with my hands, a rarity at institutions like Middlebury, while also learning from a true expert craftsman. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to work with a professor like Will," said Grace Mumford '25, who is currently taking his course.

Though this is the first class Gusakov has taught at Middlebury, students think he has proved to be adept at incorporating core aspects of the Middlebury learning experience into his course, prioritizing student connection and engagement with the Vermont landscape.

Architectural Studies major Tyler Hadar '25 reflected on the benefits of interacting with a non-traditional instructor.

"I know that I will now have a really strong connection with somebody who is well-known and well-connected in the field. So from a networking standpoint, this is incredible," Hadar said, a sentiment which Mumford echoed.

"Not only is Will a master craftsman, but he is one of the most patient and effective professors I've had," she said.

In an entirely different discipline, Helen Whybrow brings journalistic expertise from her tenure as an Editor for W.W. Norton and Orion Magazine to her course "When Truth Meets Craft," a literary journalism class centered around the role of creativity and the use of the first-person in journalism, for the second year in a row. In addition to being an editor, Whybrow is a freelance writer and often draws creative inspiration from her work as an organic farmer in the Mad River Valley of central Vermont. Her new non-fiction book, "The Salt Stones: Seasons of a Shepherd's Life" came out in June.

While Middlebury boasts an impressive selection of creative writing courses, it often lacks courses in the realms of literary nonfiction and journalism. One of Whybrow's students, Eliza Tiles '27.5, mentioned how Whybrow's class is more applicable to writing about the real world than most creative writing classes.

"We don't have a lot of journalism opportunities here on campus, so it [is] really nice to be able to take advantage of that, and use her knowledge as a journalist and an editor to kind of get that real-world experience," Tiles said.

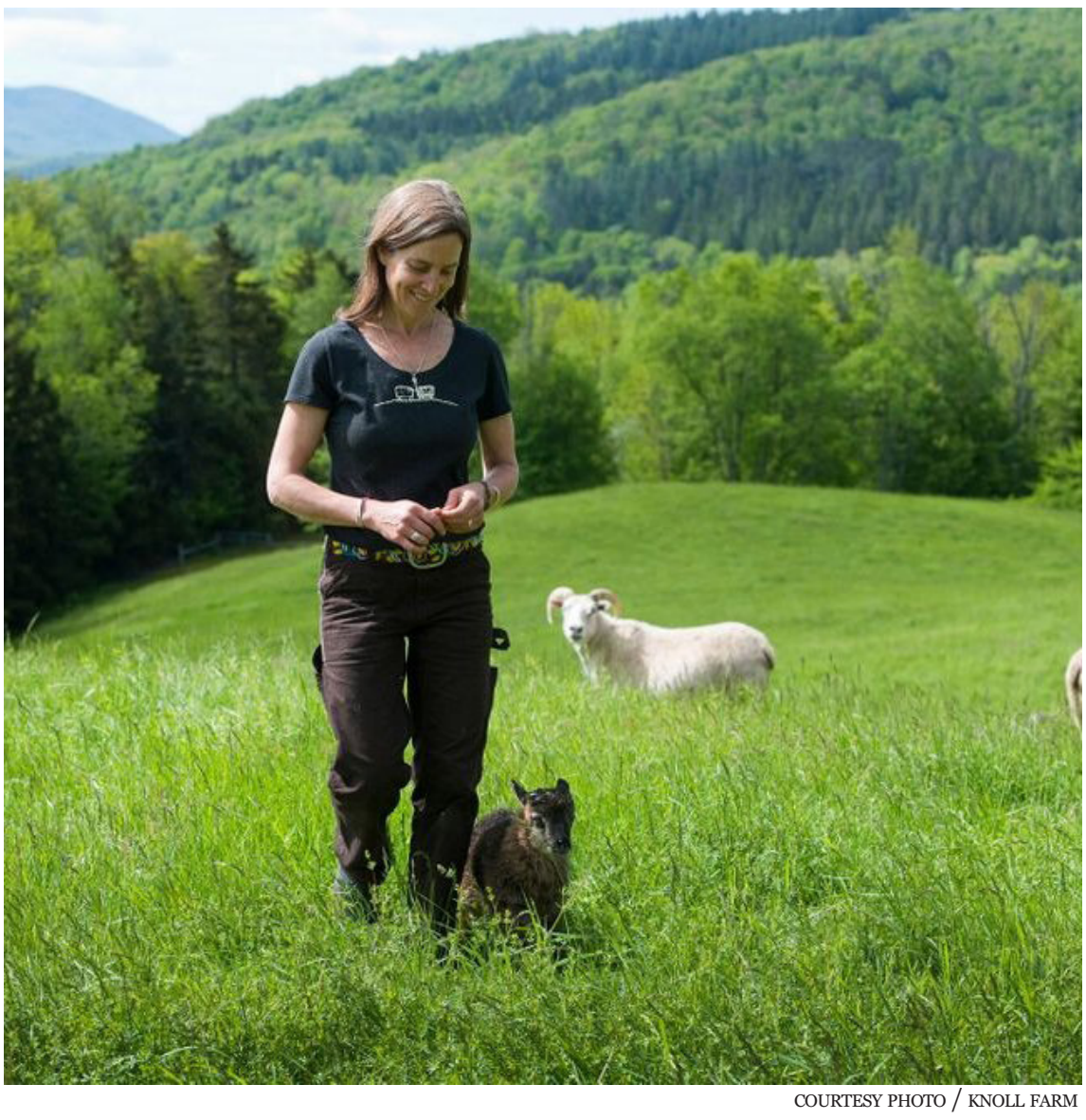
This approach has been particularly effective for student Ruby Salisbury '27 who had previously focused solely on creative writing. For her final project for the class, Salisbury is highlighting Middlebury's Memorial Trees and has found a balance between writing a nonfiction piece and sustaining a personal connection to the subject matter. Whybrow's guidance has allowed Salisbury and other students to embrace this nuanced style of writing.

Beyond bridging the gap between literary nonfiction and personal experience, Whybrow hopes that this class will help her students become more inclined to step out of their comfort zones.

"I want students to feel like they can push themselves, take risks, experiment and be curious," Whybrow said.

In an increasingly digital and disconnected age, emphasis on personal stories and individual voices is critical. A class like Whybrow's stands to give these students a new appreciation for quality writing and authentic storytelling.

The dedication and enthusiasm of these visiting professors are apparent in their thoughtfully curated course curricula, which allow students to explore practical applications of skills outside of the traditional Middlebury course catalog. This J-Term, Middlebury campus continues to be a hub for creativity, experience and expertise.



COURTESY PHOTO / KNOLL FARM

Helen Whybrow, a writer and editor teaching the J-Term class "When Truth Meets Craft," co-owns Knoll Farm in Vermont and draws inspiration from farming and sheparding for her writing.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL GUSAKOV

Will Gusakov, a professional timber framer, is one of this year's visiting professors for Winter Term.

Faculty vote to restrict graduation honors

Continued from Page 1

and faculty acknowledged that the new system would do little to tackle such a widespread problem. During the meeting, Professor of Political Science and Faculty Council member Bert Johnson explained that part of the impetus for proposing the new system was to create the possibility that grade inflation might one day be solved.

"By moving to a percentage system that is the two percent summa, 15% magna, 30% cum, rather than adjusting GPA cutoffs, by doing that we open the possibility that grade inflation could actually be solved as a problem, and we wouldn't have to change the percent cutoffs. In other words, if grades started going back down again, that wouldn't necessarily affect the college honors system," he said.

Some professors wished that grade inflation –– one underlying factor bringing faculty to propose changes to the honors system –– was being addressed head-on, before conversations about the honors system.

"The issue isn't our system, it's grading. And the fact that we're spending all of this time talking about adjusting the system, rather than very vigorously investigating grading inflation, strikes me as getting things a little bit backward," one professor said. "We're solving for something that we should be fixing first."

One professor advocated for garnering further student feedback before implementing changes that would shift honors from being based on GPA cutoffs to student rankings. Another professor argued that student input should not be considered –– Latin honors are given by the faculty to the students, and therefore should be at faculty discretion.

The decision to eliminate the Valedictorian and Salutatorian statuses was based on the number of students who recently graduated with a 4.0 GPA: In May 2024, there were nine students who graduated a 4.0 and three were named Valedictorian, which reduced the significance of the title.

The updated honors system will remove the College Scholar distinction, which is currently awarded to students with a semester GPA above 3.60 and no grade below a B. The Dean's List, currently given to students with a semester GPA above 3.30 and no grade below a B, will now be awarded to the top 15% of full-time students each semester.

As with the changes to Latin honors, this ranking-based allocation is intended to allow for grade inflation or deflation. This shift also mimics the policies of peer institutions, which all have only one tier of percentile-based semester honors. If grading remains consistent with recent years, the Dean's List cutoff will most likely be a 4.0, meaning more than 15% of the student body will receive the distinction. In fall 2023, 24.8% of full-time students had a 4.0.

Before voting to approve changes to the system, faculty also discussed a motion to eliminate the Latin honors system altogether, debating whether a college-wide honor system is the most effective way to bestow merit on Middlebury students. While faculty were hesitant to completely abandon the system and ultimately voted against the motion 65 to 26, there was widespread agreement among faculty that the current system is not working as intended.

One professor suggested that this system does not always recognize the students who have pushed themselves the most academically. The motion to dissolve the entire system received support from other professors, who questioned the role of Latin honors in upholding Middlebury's competitive culture.

"Our current system reinforces a faulty and harmful belief among our students that high grades are the goal of a Middlebury education. I think we should be emphasizing exploration, learning and growth as the goals of a college education," another professor said.

THE SHELDON MUSEUM EARNS $650,000 GRANT TO HELP FUND FUTURE PROGRAMS

By DECLAN RICHARDS
Contributing Writer

The Henry Sheldon Museum received a grant in December for $650,000 from the Mellon Foundation, the largest supporter of arts and the humanities in the U.S. The money will allow the museum to increase its curatorial research, hire new staff members and expand the resources it offers to Middlebury as the oldest community museum in the country since its founding in 1882.

"The Mellon Foundation grant will allow the [Henry Sheldon Museum] to advance exhibition research and curatorial practices to include new stories and narratives in the permanent exhibits," said Coco Moseley, the executive director of the Sheldon.

The Mellon Foundation is a philanthropic organization which focuses on supporting arts and culture, higher education, and the humanities. The foundation gives grants to institutions and individuals who align with the foundation's mission in promoting a richer, more inclusive understanding of American history.

However, it is not just the museum and its exhibits that will benefit from this grant, but also the Stewart-Swift Research Center, a component of the Sheldon which houses a collection of Vermont artifacts that is available to the community for a stronger understanding of Addison County's history.

"The Museum welcomes visitors and researchers of all types, from students to authors to local history enthusiasts, to explore exhibits and the archival collection, hosts programming for all ages and provides opportunities for museum internships for high school and college students in our community," Moseley said.

Julia Breckenridge '25.5 has volunteered as a collections assistant with the museum and has also used its collections as a resource for class.

"The Sheldon has the potential to be a real asset to students," Breckendridge said in an interview with The Campus. "I have loved working with the collections. From rehousing a penny-farthing bicycle to cataloging a spinning wheel, the Sheldon has learning opportunities to offer Middlebury students that they cannot find elsewhere."

This is not the Mellon Foundation's first foray into Vermont, or even Addison County. Last year Middlebury College received a $1.48 million grant from the non-profit to fund education on migrant justice in Vermont and 30 new Public Humanities Labs through the Axinn Center for the Humanities. The museum's new grant will serve a different purpose within the wider community than the college's funding, however.

"The grant will allow the HSM to expand its staff capacity, including hiring a 3-year post-doctoral position in Public History to work alongside staff and stakeholders to guide the Museum's development of new permanent exhibitions and programming initiatives that invite community members and visitors to connect with our area's history," according to the Sheldon Museum's press release.

COURTESY PHOTO / THE SHELDON MUSEUM
The Sheldon Museum received a 650K Grant from the Mellon Foundation.

Moseley explained that the museum founder "filled the museum with artifacts, art, documents, photographs, ephemera (like show tickets, stubs, and postcards) and more that now provide a glimpse into Vermont's storied past," a mission which she said will be aided by the Mellon Foundation's grant.

The Henry Sheldon Museum showcases many artifacts from its namesake, which tell a story through everyday objects — or sometimes bizarre ones, such as a mummified house cat. Moseley said the museum is committed to representing the local history and providing a well-documented narrative of Addison County's heritage.

This grant will be distributed over three years, allowing the museum to improve its exhibits and reimagine their role in the community as a 21st century museum. According to Moseley, changes to the exhibits aim to provide a more inclusive experience for the community by spotlighting different voices and stories from Vermont's history.

"Small museums are almost always struggling to find the money to run, and they are so important," Breckenridge said. "They hold the history of everyday lives, which is an extremely rich and underrated area."

Editor's Note: Senior Local Editor Mandy Berghela '26 contributed reporting to this story.

MIDDLEBURY POLICE INVESTIGATING POSSIBLE GUNFIRE INCIDENT NEAR HANNAFORD

Continued from Page 1

Hannaford but did not find them in this location. They then received notifications that the vehicle was in the area of Abbey Pond Trail, where they were able to detain those involved. Officers detained seven people, one of them a runaway minor, and found two firearms, as well as other ballistics evidence which had been stolen from one of the detainee's family members, according to the press release.

"The age of the people involved ranged from 14–18 and were released back into the custody of their parents and guardians," Covey said. "Some of them are from Addison County, while some of them are also from neighboring counties as well."

The detained individuals were released due to the fact that police are still investigating the incident to find evidence as well as witnesses in order to put together what happened on Saturday night, both in St. Albans and in Middlebury.

Covey clarified to The Campus that police have no reason or information to suggest that there is a risk to the public.

The press release also stated that shots may have been fired in the area of East Middlebury.

Police ask anyone with information concerning the incident to call the department at 802-388-3191.

COURTESY PHOTO / U.S. FOREST SERVICE
Abbey Pond Trail, the area where the suspected car and its occupants were detained by police.

The gunshot was reported to have been fired behing Hannaford, the grocery store on Court Street.

COURTESY PHOTO / PINE TREE

NEW LATIN HONORS SYSTEM IS THE RIGHT STEP. BUT IT WON'T FIX GRADE INFLATION.

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Last month, the Faculty Council passed significant changes to the college's graduation honors system that will go into effect at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

The most notable among them is the replacement of the current Latin Honors system with a percentile system. Currently, Latin Honors are awarded based on GPA thresholds: summa cum laude for graduating students with a 3.8 GPA or above, magna cum laude for those with a 3.6 and above, and cum laude for those with a 3.4 and above. Under the new structure, summa cum laude will be awarded to the top two percent of students, magna cum laude to the top 15%, and cum laude to the top 30%. This update aligns Middlebury's system with those of peer institutions like Carleton College, Williams College and Bowdoin College.

We support the faculty's decision to revise the honors system, and it is their prerogative to set the percentiles for summa, magna and cum laude honors each year. However, after a vigorous debate at the recent meeting where the vote took place, we can't help but wonder if the Latin honors system is being used as a proxy for more serious issues that affect Middlebury — namely, grade inflation. It is easy to revise the standards by which we bestow honors but much more difficult to change the four years of grading that comes before Middlebury students walk across the stage.

In 2024, under the current system, a shocking 91% of graduating students received some form of Latin honors, with 56% earning summa cum laude. As the Faculty Plenary Meeting Agenda noted, "any 'honors' designation that nearly every student receives is not functioning as a mark of distinction." If we are to have a Latin Honors system at all, it should achieve its mission of honoring students who work the hardest. Thankfully, the new honors system appears to be immune from grade inflation because of how it ties fixed percentiles to each honorific.

However, the Latin Honors may not hold much meaning at all in a time when hard work and high grades don't necessarily correlate. According to the Zeitgeist 6.0, 65% of students at Middlebury have broken the Honor Code — an increase of 40 percentage points since 2019. Continuing to reward students with exceptional grades while knowing that a majority of students have cheated on assignments or exams at Middlebury is counterproductive. Faculty at the meeting also noted that Latin honors lose additional meaning when certain departments inflate grades more than others, increasing the likelihood of high GPAs for students in certain majors. And with access to platforms like MiddCourses, it is fairly simple to find out which courses are likely to give out an "easy A." With this reality in mind, removing Latin honors entirely also deserves consideration.

Tackling grade inflation — and whether the downsides of popping our grading bubble are worth it — is worthy of serious, official debate. Let's address the core issue head-on: Is Middlebury going to continue down the path of ever-increasing As, or will it seek to overhaul the system through grading curves, recalibrating expectations and, ultimately, grade deflation?

We sympathize with many of the reasons professors award so many A's. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted students' mental health struggles, and leniency during that time never fully disappeared. Additionally, professors often want students to focus more on learning than on grades. Ensuring students good grades early in the semester can help them relax and learn, but this leniency can also give them license to slack off. And once grade inflation sets in, it's difficult to reverse; students quickly become accustomed to receiving A's.

We know that grades matter for the many Middlebury students who pursue graduate school or the most competitive jobs where a high GPA can be a threshold for employment. But this raises another question: If nearly everyone is earning high grades, how do employers or graduate programs distinguish between students from Middlebury?

Ultimately, grade inflation fails us as students. It removes the incentive to push ourselves or be comfortable with failure. When we are practically guaranteed an A at the start of the semester, seeing it on our transcript doesn't feel like an accomplishment. Grades should never substitute for meaningful instruction from professors, but they should be representations of this feedback — without criticism and a concrete incentive to listen to it, we miss out on the valuable opportunity to learn. Faculty, in consultation with students (perhaps through the Student Government Association), should weigh the benefits of serious deflationary measures against the possible ramifications for future careers.

What could solutions for grade inflation look like? We noted several schools such as Boston University and Princeton University that are well-known for their harsh curves, in addition to personal anecdotes from students at other schools who suggested A's are a measure of hard work for the most dedicated, not an expectation for all. Faculty should get more comfortable acknowledging the imperfections of student exams and essays, rather than rotely bestowing 100's to shoddy work. Students have a part to play as well: lower your expectations and consider taking difficult courses that will challenge you, even if you heard the professor is hard.

At the end of the day, the difference between a 3.94 GPA (the would-be cutoff for magna cum laude under the new system for the 2024 graduating class) and a 3.99 GPA (the would-be cutoff for summa cum laude under the new system for the 2024 graduating class) is not that meaningful, and the new system is still only a band-aid on the much larger issue of grade inflation. Students who work hard should still be recognized, but until these issues are tackled more comprehensively, the real value of a college education will continue to be compromised.

While we support the shift to a percentile-based honors system, we urge Middlebury to use this as an opportunity to take on the deeper issue at play. Honors should truly reflect excellence, not just our ability to get by.

My weight loss journey

Op-Ed

Joshua Garson *is a member of the class of 2026.*

At my heaviest weigh-in, I clocked in at 311 lbs. I had a BMI of 45.6, which categorized me as morbidly obese. Today I weigh 196 lbs, a 115 lbs weight loss. I can confidently say for the first time in my adult life that I am healthy. People often ask me how I found success. Usually, I tell them something along the lines of "eat less, walk more" or " hot girl walk," but in reality, there was a lot more to it.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about my journey this semester, and I want to offer more thoughtful insight on what I feel is the key to weight loss that fad programs and YouTube creators fail to address. Love and support is the secret to weight loss that gave me the strength to see this journey through.

I want to provide some context on my struggle with weight growing up. My parents did their absolute best to keep me active as a child. I attended a kid's gym that emphasized nutritional education and did Taekwondo through middle school (I do have a black belt now). I stuck with this routine through high school and even threw shot put senior year just so I could tell people they were speaking to a varsity athlete. However, these efforts proved futile. I enjoyed sweets and carbs in excess. Man, I still love chocolate milk. I weighed 100 pounds entering kindergarten and packed on another 200 plus pounds over the next 13 years.

I didn't let weight hold me back in life. I never experienced exclusion at school or camp based on my size and had great relationships. This shows the remarkable progress in the human condition that society has made. However, life with childhood obesity is challenging. Going to gym class or Little League practice and not being able to keep up with your friends is demoralizing. The hardest days for me were at my annual checkups. It was heartbreaking to see how my health worried my parents as the doctor explained the severity of my situation.

I was so excited to start at Middlebury. A picture of myself and my roommate from move-in day is shown below. Fluctuations at over 300 pounds are large, I estimate I may have weighed as much as 325 pounds in this picture. Behind all my excitement there was dread. Middlebury is an outdoorsy and active school. Would people want to spend time with me? In hindsight, that worry was frivolous. I have met my best friends here who have been vital to my success with weight loss.

Last fall I embarked on my weight loss journey. I was tired of living with a glass ceiling. I have too much to achieve and too many people who love me to cut my life short. To lose weight, I would need three things to maintain a caloric deficit: a well-defined goal, accountability and a lot of exercise with a sustainable eating plan. At 6'0" on Tinder and 5'9" in the real world, a healthy weight goal would be to lose 131 lbs, or weigh 180 lbs in 12 to 15 months. Well-defined goal, check. I keyed in brothers from the Middlebury College Rugby Club. Accountability, check. Then one day, I stumbled across this exercise on TikTok called the Hot Girl Walk and thought, "Why can't I do that?" My good friend put me onto the app MyFitnessPal so I could track my caloric consumption and make healthier food choices. Exercise and food plan, check.

No plan is impervious to the emotional challenges of weight loss. You will feel hungry all the time and struggle with focus. You will feel isolated when passing on activities with friends to go to the gym or stick to your diet. I dealt with a lot of uncertainty and anxiety at the beginning as I went down this new road. Patience is necessary for change.

Love gave me the strength to overcome these challenges. On a particularly hard day last spring while I was walking on the treadmill someone came up to me and became the first person to say they were proud of me for my progress. Moments like that, memories of good times with friends and family, and envisioning a healthy future acted as a numbing agent for the burn in my calves and the urge for whole chocolate milk (we still get together sometimes). There is no greater source of strength than love. Taking care of your body will also teach you to love yourself.

Fifteen hundred miles on the treadmill later, I have lost the weight I needed to lose. I can walk into any store and there will be clothes that fit me. What I look forward to most is my newfound appreciation for health and being there for my loved ones.

COURTESY PHOTOS / JOSHUA GARSON

Joshua Garson's before and after photos on his weight loss journey.

The Middlebury Campus

EDITOR IN CHIEF
*Ryan McElroy **
MANAGING EDITORS
*Cole Chaudhari **
*Madeleine Kaptein **
BUSINESS DIRECTOR
Orly Berke
EDITORIAL BOARD DIRECTOR
*Hannah Sayre **
DESIGN DIRECTOR
Eliza Bernene
DIGITAL DIRECTOR
Sheila Lam
NEWS DESK
Maggie Bryan†*
*Rosella Graham**
Caroline Jiao
*Evan Weiss **
LOCAL DESK
*Mandy Berghela *†*
Izzy Ronda
*Ben Wagner **
Agnes Wang
OPINIONS DESK
*Claire Shapiro *†*
*Charlotte Roberts **
*Lucy Schembre **
*Haydn Suske-Funk **
ARTS & CULTURE DESK
*Catherine Goodrich *†*
Virginia Frau
*Norah Khan**
Tulip Larson
SPORTS DESK
Jack McGuire†*
Ting Cui
Jonathan Buchholz
MULTIMEDIA DESK
June Su †
VISUALS DESK
Idanesi Ojior
Skiles Roberts-Salvador
David Zhao
ONLINE EDITORS
Mattea Fisher
Clio Seikaly Huber
Phi Nguyen
Celina Xu
Iris Xu
Hugo Zhang
LAYOUT EDITORS
Noor Khan
Sophia Kovacs
Henry Putnam
Gideon Wolf

**Member of Editorial Board*
† Senior Editor

The Campus reserves the right to deny publication of all or part of a submission for any reason. This includes, but is not limited to: the making of assertions based on hearsay; the relation of private conversations; the libelous mention of unverifiable events; the use of vulgar language or personal attacks; unwarranted requests for anonymity.

More information about the paper and its submission policies can be found online at www.middleburycampus.com.

The opinions expressed by contributors to the Opinions section, as well as reviews, columns, editorial comics and other commentary, are views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the newspaper. The Campus welcomes letters to the editor at 250 words or less, or opinions submissions at 800 words or less.

@middleburycampus
@middcampus
The Middlebury Campus

SPECS PANTHER: AN ANALYSIS OF "HEARTSTOPPER" SEASON 3

Op-Ed

Aiden Levy is a member of the class of 2025 and a SPECS Peer-Educator

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd Kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever, and about whatever is most comfortable, easy and safe for you. Our editions will be fun and educational!

In a time when the country — and world — seems to be immeasurably divided, the default reaction of many is to escape reality and seek out alternative media forms. Whether through social media apps, pop culture, film, or television, on-screen production has the potential to be both a safe haven or a step further to spiraling. If you're looking for a particularly lighthearted, syrupy sweet show to get lost in, look no further than Netflix's "Heartstopper." This past October, season three was released, proving to be a crucial addition to the already-acclaimed series. Anchored by the charismatic leads Joe Locke (Charlie) and Kit Connor (Nick) but further elevated by an outstanding supporting cast, the newest season matures and explores the difficulties of teenage love, anxiety and shame while never losing its nostalgic, heart-wrenching touch.

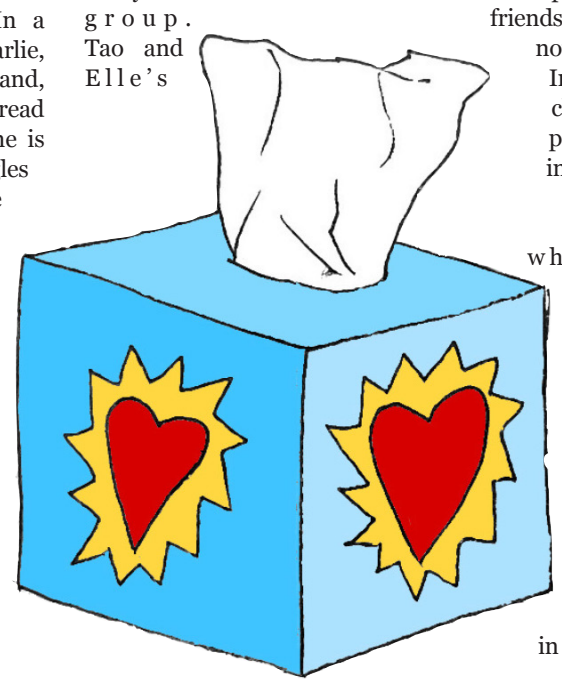
Throughout the eight episodes, the characters face traumas including eating disorders, internalized stigma, hate culture and uneasy family relations — all very real hardships that today's adolescents grapple with. They also tackle sex and societal pressures, delving into the bubbly side of schoolhood sexual discovery while still directing attention to negative mental health consequences. Through a SPECS lens, the following (beware: spoilers!) is an analysis of season three of "Heartstopper" and why it is the perfect, albeit ephemeral, antidote to today's world brimmed with hate and cynicism.

In episode one, Charlie is initially nervous about his newfound discovery that he loves Nick. Nick, after taking notice of Charlie's abnormal eating habits, takes him aside privately to ask if he thinks he has an eating disorder. In a panic, Charlie denies and deflects, a common unhealthy coping mechanism for teens who struggle with eating disorders. The couple's disagreement begins to strain their relationship, as Charlie builds an emotional wall to avoid appearing fragile and Nick's concern for his boyfriend's safety gnaws at him. The approach that "Heartstopper" takes to on-screen eating disorders is commendable, a feat that few shows attempt at the teenage level and even fewer shows succeed at. Acted with sensitivity and relatability, Charlie's emerging eating disorder — later formally diagnosed in episode four as anorexia nervosa paired with OCD — has spillover effects in his friend group dynamics and his relationships with his parents, sister and boyfriend. Eating disorders, especially among teenagers and young adults, can be linked with sex, sexuality and gender dysphoria, especially true for Charlie and his history of severe in-school bullying.

By episode four, Charlie's mental health reaches a fever pitch, and he admits to Nick that he is likely undiagnosed and in need of acute treatment. In a heartbreaking scene, Charlie, while holding Nick's hand, sits his parents down to read from a prepared note that he is mentally declining, struggles with food and wants to be connected with professional resources. Equal parts sad in its emotional genuineness and hopeful in its demonstration of a supported and loved teen seeking help, the episode cements Heartstopper's unique ability of blending real-life emotions and experiences with optimism and sympathy. Charlie is admitted to an in-patient facility and connected to a therapist, which he ultimately reflects upon as helpful while the script still acknowledges the dark history of psychiatric facilities. For many, disordered eating is an ingrained part of culture, especially heightened amongst queer individuals. By dedicating a significant chunk of airtime to properly address the steps of eating disorder recovery, "Heartstopper" succeeds in representation beyond for its own sake.

Throughout the middle episodes, the supporting characters and friend group are given the opportunity to shine and follow their plotlines. Isaac comes out as asexual and aromantic, and stands up for himself when he feels ostracized from the couple-heavy friend group. Tao and Elle's relationship flourishes despite the distance between their schools, with their respective documentary and artistic passions being followed. Elle's storyline in particular stands out — she embraces her intersectional Black and transgender identity, even in the face of harassment. Once the two decide they want to have sex, Elle reckons with complicated emotions stemming from her gender dysphoria, and while the show not-so-subtly throws in public health messages, it showcases the challenging and awkward sides of young adult sex. Darcy and Tara provide for viewers an endearing portrait of sapphic love, with the former later exploring their nonbinary identity with support from their girlfriend, friends and grandmother (but notably, not mother). Imogen and Sahar, two characters who were given precious little attention in earlier seasons, were likewise afforded time to develop. Sahar, who is bisexual, hooks up with Imogen at the Halloween party, resulting in friction between the two close friends and a moving scene from Imogen who admits she has always faked liking boys because of societal pressures. Charlie's sister further develops in the new season, as does the relationship between Mr. Ajayi and Mr. Farouk, two teachers who portray an intimate examination of adult queer joy. As one Buzzfeed reviewer noted, "Heartstopper" can be simultaneously heartwarming, healing and gutting for some. For older generations, or even Millennials and parts of Gen Z, the diverse and proud queer romance and authenticity in the show was — and perhaps, still is — not their lived experience. Another critic wrote that the show "helped heal the hurt teen inside me," a testament to the powerful ability of a simple television series to mend past emotional wounds. By the final episode, the crew seem to all be in good places, and Nick learns the hard but valuable lesson that codependency in his relationship with Charlie is both unhealthy and unnecessary. Near the finale's conclusion, Charlie and Nick have sex, and Charlie takes off his shirt, a symbolic representation of his successful, albeit long and nonlinear, road to recovery. Ultimately, Nick and Charlie emerge stronger than ever, their resilience shaped by personal growth and the steadfast support of their friends.

With a killer soundtrack (see: Billie Eilish, Olivia Rodrigo, Maggie Rogers, Birdy and more), mesmerizing performances and a rare demonstration of unbridled queer joy and hardships, season three of "Heartstopper" upgrades its impact and makes for the perfect feel-good escape.



HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email us at campus@middlebury.edu with your submissions!

In "Proof of Life," variety is the spice

By Catherine Goodrich
Seniors Arts & Culture Editor

Christmas comes twice a year for the Middlebury arts and culture scene when the Johnson Memorial Building opens its doors at the end of each semester for its biannual student showcase. In the midst of the stress of finals, student work, especially theses, offer a welcome dose of inspiration during an otherwise hectic time of year.

The most recent holiday showcase bustled with friends, professors and family members taking in a semester's worth of hard work for Architectural Studies and Studio Art students. A highlight of these showcases is the opportunity to see thesis projects, and this semester was no exception. For their fall exhibition, the ART 0700: Advanced Studio Thesis course displayed 11 projects ranging across mediums and methodologies in the exhibit "Proof of Life."

The Studio Thesis class allows students to delve into their creative practices in tandem with regular class discussions and critiques. Each student receives studio space and a small stipend to develop their body of work; it is a chance for artists to take their interests seriously and build upon the niches and skills they've cultivated throughout their undergraduate careers. This fall, the course was led by Professor of Studio Art Roger White.

"Teaching the senior thesis class is always a pleasure because you get to work with students who are self-directed, creative, and serious about their art. You get to watch young artists make discoveries, reflect on what they're doing, and take it to a higher level of ambition," White wrote. "At the same time, the class is also an exercise in collaboration: the students organize the exhibition themselves, choose the title and theme, and decide what goes where."

"Proof of Life" featured everything from oil paintings to photographs to ceramics to a wooden stall in the style of a phone booth. On the exhibit's opening night, the gallery space was full of big smiles and exclamations of, "Oh my god, I need a print of this in my room!"

"I love how different everyone's work is and even though we talk about it throughout the semester, the final show is an amazing moment of seeing it all in the same space and seeing our pieces in conversation with each other," wrote featured artist Rose Robinson '24.5 in a message to The Campus. "And it is so sweet to see everyone celebrating and sharing that moment with their friends and family."

Near the entry, Nicoletta Coupe '25's renderings of the Willard Beach Shacks on the coast of Southern Maine are a beautiful, poignant appraisal of the role of landscape portraits in the time of climate destruction. These works' transportive tranquility lends itself to an acute interplay with the harsh reality that these shacks have since washed away.

The theme of commemoration seamlessly guides gallery-goers to "Memory VI," a collection of oil paintings by Ava Carbonara '25. Six works of oil on linen depict various characters and settings in rich shades and poses, evoking a family's photo album. With a deft hand, "Memory VI" blends reality with recreation.

The adjacent collection of screen prints by Harriet Dahlstrom '24.5 adjacent collection of screen prints reproduces dreamlike illustrations of dinosaur-like creatures, patterned boulders, trees and humanoid figures. The repetitions and variations of these motifs demonstrate the merit of coming back to aesthetic ideas again and again.

"I've done three theses; each was unfulfilling enough for me to come back for more and try to get it right the next time," Dahlstrom wrote in a message to The Campus. "This is the first one that I'm walking away proud of the work I did and the pieces I put on the wall."

The pursuit of collecting and combining to capture a fascination authentic to the artist can be seen throughout "Proof of Life." For Beckett Pintair '24.5, a collection of words, self-portraits and audio recordings decorated a wooden booth entitled "Autobiography of a Mirror".

Nearby Miriam Bamaca '25's display consists of one large painting and a series of smaller works on paper. The pieces are mesmerising, a series of energetic lines and dots, that read as a mysterious, hieroglyphic alphabet. Nowelle Spencer '26 installed a collection of plaster breasts that shirks unrealistic, everyday expectations of what bodies should be and instead, defines them as works of art.

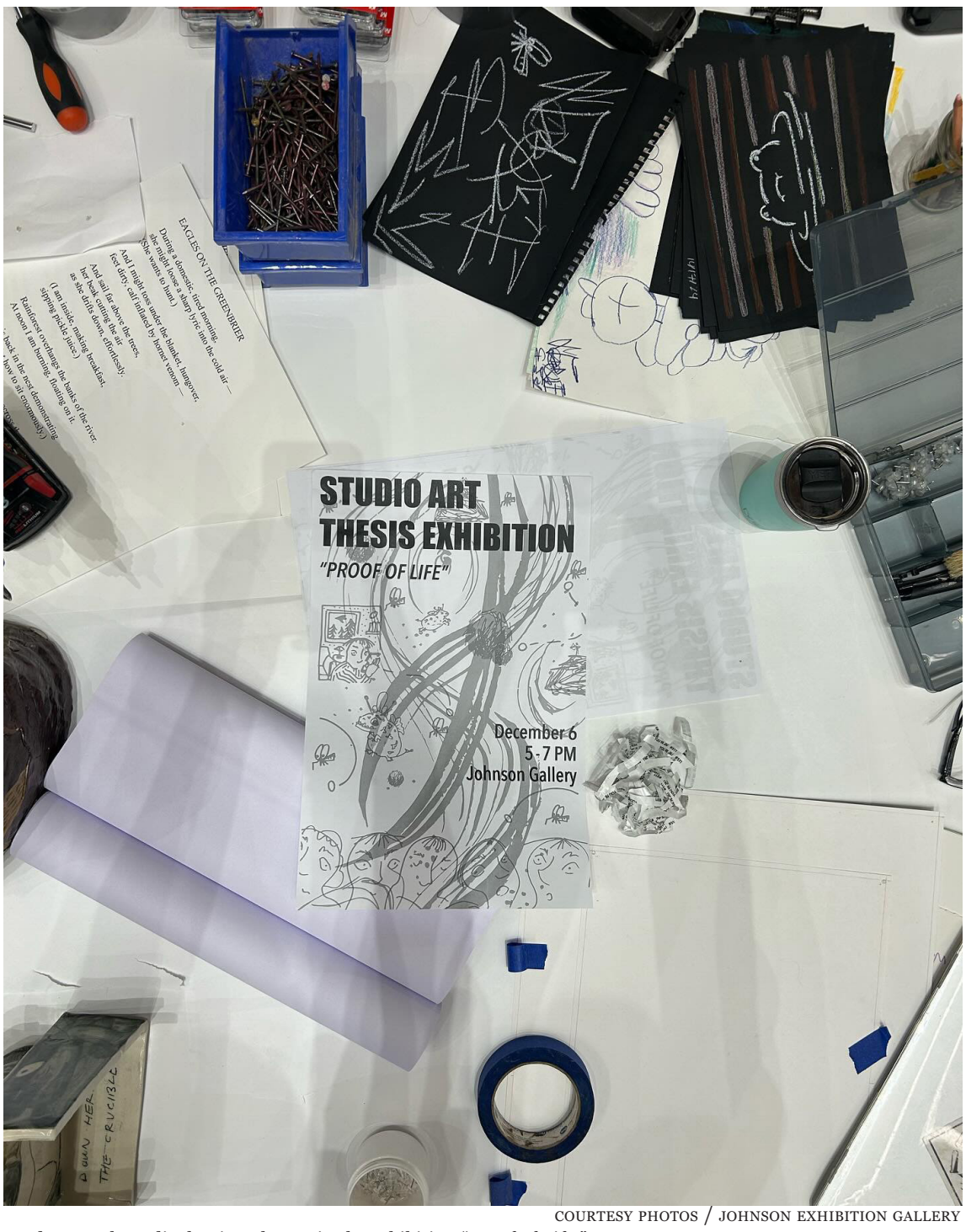
An invitation to personal freedom is also centered in Harper Nichols '24.5's featured work. A colorful message reading "Will you play with me?" sets the tone for a bright, Warholian curation of prints, paintings and quilting. Child-like wonder plays off the wall from Nichols's work to pedestals a few feet away displaying Robinson's ceramics. In her artist statement, Robinson posits, "I think of my work as children's literature for adults about how to be children again."

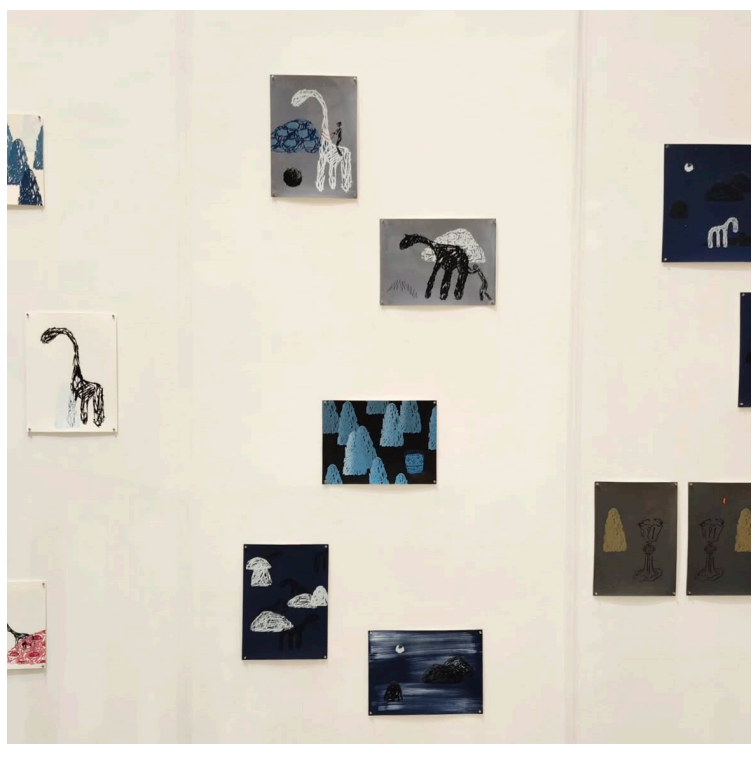
A fairytale charm similarly shapes Thomas Walsh '25's work. Behind curtains fashioned out of bed sheets and thread, two mixed media pieces present mosaics of faces, floral imagery and teeth. Like opening a pop-up book, Walsh cultivates an experience that is immensely fun to look at.

Amanda Martins '25's interactive sculptural piece commands the center of the gallery space. A wooden crate, sections of rope and crescent shaped wooden beams painstakingly decorated with feather-like wood fragments hang from the ceiling by intricate threads, creating a work that's as arresting as it is avant.

Similarly captivating, Ajani Wilson '24.5's photography series captures beautiful, abundant natural scenes as well as dark, gloomy interiors. Figures are carefully posed within the photographs which are displayed in tasteful wooden frames. It's the perfect display to send gallery-goers off with.

"Proof of Life" showcases unrestricted (though always thoughtful) creativity. To quote Dahlstrom, "It's a grade on the line rather than your livelihood, the way it is for many professional artists." With the guidance of professors and the support of other students, it's nothing short of remarkable to see what young Middlebury artists are capable of.





COURTESY PHOTOS / JOHNSON EXHIBITION GALLERY

Student work on display in Johnson in the exhibition "Proof of Life."

REEL CRITIC: NOSFERATU

By NORAH KHAN
Arts and Culture Editor

Warning: This review contains spoilers.

Vampires are having their moment, and you could say it's pretty fang-tastic.

Robert Egger's rendition of "Nosferatu" debuted to audiences in December and masterfully retells the classic vampire tale from the 1922 German silent film, living up to the visually arresting and atmospherically compelling original. A bewildering variety of surviving prints, restorations and alternate versions of "Nosferatu" have been created and attempted in the last century or so, but the latest rendering indubitably stands out.

"Nosferatu" is chock full of everything you'd want in a gothic horror — decaying castles, grey colorscapes and a young woman facing intense emotional turmoil. The story takes place in Germany in 1838 and focuses on young couple Ellen (Lily-Rose Depp) and Thomas Hutter (Nicholas Hoult) as they fight to survive a terrorizing curse plaguing them and their marriage.

An enduring aspect of "Nosferatu" films has been their unique depictions of vampires. No, get that image of Edward from "Twilight" out of your head, and instead think of a literal living corpse. Nosferatu, or Count Orlok, played by Bill Skarsgård (albeit underneath layers of prosthetics) is a decaying corpse, fixed with a skeletal body of a grey-purplish hue and a sprinkling of wispy hair. His rendering is downright disgusting, but oh-so-well crafted and genuinely terrifying in up-close moments (of which there are many).

Lily-Rose Depp breathes new life into protagonist Ellen Hutter, allowing her to take on a more autonomous role in the film. This Ellen is desperate and vulnerable but simultaneously brave and strong in her choices.

Nicholas Hoult portrays Thomas Hutter with tears in his eyes and a ragged scream ripping out of his throat every thirty-odd minutes. Thomas works hard, loves his wife and aspires to be a well-rounded gentleman and good husband.

In this adaptation, several side characters receive expanded roles, with Friedrich (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) and Anna Harding (Emma Corrin) standing out the most. Unlike their limited presence in the original, the lively couple is portrayed with greater depth, which makes their tragic deaths by the film's conclusion even more impactful.

The 1992 film depicts these characters differently: Friedrich lives with his sister, Anna is not his wife, and he has no children. Ellen's interactions with the Hardings are quiet and minimal.

"Nosferatu" reimagines this dynamic, establishing Anna and Ellen as lifelong friends, while Friedrich and Thomas share a similarly close bond.

Eggers also introduces Friedrich's skepticism of the supernatural, a trait absent in the original.

One major difference between "Nosferatu" and its predecessors is the character Professor Albin Eberhart Von Franz, portrayed by Willem Dafoe. Egger's new character is an occult scientist and self-proclaimed vampire hunter who helps Ellen and her husband uncover the darkness behind Nosferatu's curse. His character is an interesting pivot from the earlier films since he plays a crucial role in furthering this epic drama.

Von Franz is a man on one mission: salvation from darkness. He employs any technique, no matter how fantastic, to reach his goal of absolving Depp's frail yet tortured Ellen from the madness that haunts her every waking hour.

The very nature of Ellen's relationship with Count Orlok takes on new life in this version. In the original, Count Orlok becomes infatuated with Ellen after seeing a portrait of her when Thomas visits his castle, leading him to torment the young woman through his curse. In Egger's version, Ellen is the one responsible for summoning Orlok to her when she was a young girl, using her connection to the supernatural to address her loneliness. This aspect makes their relationship feel more intimate and enduring.

One of the most visually pleasing moments is a frame of Thomas standing in the ominous and eerie dark forest outside Count Orlok's castle. Thomas is met at a crossroads — this time a physical one, far from the metaphorical one he had encountered earlier (to leave or to stay with his desperate bride).

The forest is dark, the trees and Thomas are just a silhouette. A carriage is delivered, suddenly, pulled by a pair of midnight stallions that one fears would jump out of the screen and trample the audience. The moment is potent, dark and damning; the carriage delivers Thomas to the dilapidated castle of Nosferatu, catalyzing the rest of the plot.

The costume design is incredible, far from an afterthought. It draws heavily from gothic fashion and the dark romanticism of traditional silhouettes, yet they also reflect individuality and modern reinterpretation. Costume director Linda Muir's designs — featuring intricate lace, corsets that simultaneously restrict and empower, and elongated sleeves that have an ethereal quality — become visual symbols of desire, control and fragility.

The wedding outfit that Ellen dons before sacrificing herself to Orlok (to fulfill the curse) has lilac in the headpiece; the very same flower that Orlok associates with her, the same flowers that she cried over before Thomas left her, the same flowers that she knows she smells of. While Orlok is pursuing her, she is also luring him in. She is finally ready to confront the dark contortion of her desire.

Her husband is dismissive of her lust and her heightened emotions, which leads her to manifest her desires in a manner she is disgusted by but yearns for in a very primal way. Orlok is representative of how Ellen experiences her sexuality — as something monstrous but also intrinsically tied to her being.

"Nosferatu" is a controversial piece. Many are torn between the horror and sensuality of gothic romance being depicted on the silver screen — is Ellen being preyed upon? Is she doing the preying? Is Thomas a good husband? Is anyone in this film "good" to begin with?

In that controversy lies the answer — humans are complex. The metaphors we use as filmmakers, writers and artists to convey our complexities can be befuddling, and isolating. Yet when you truly think about it — what demons do you have in your closet? And how far are they willing to travel to find you?

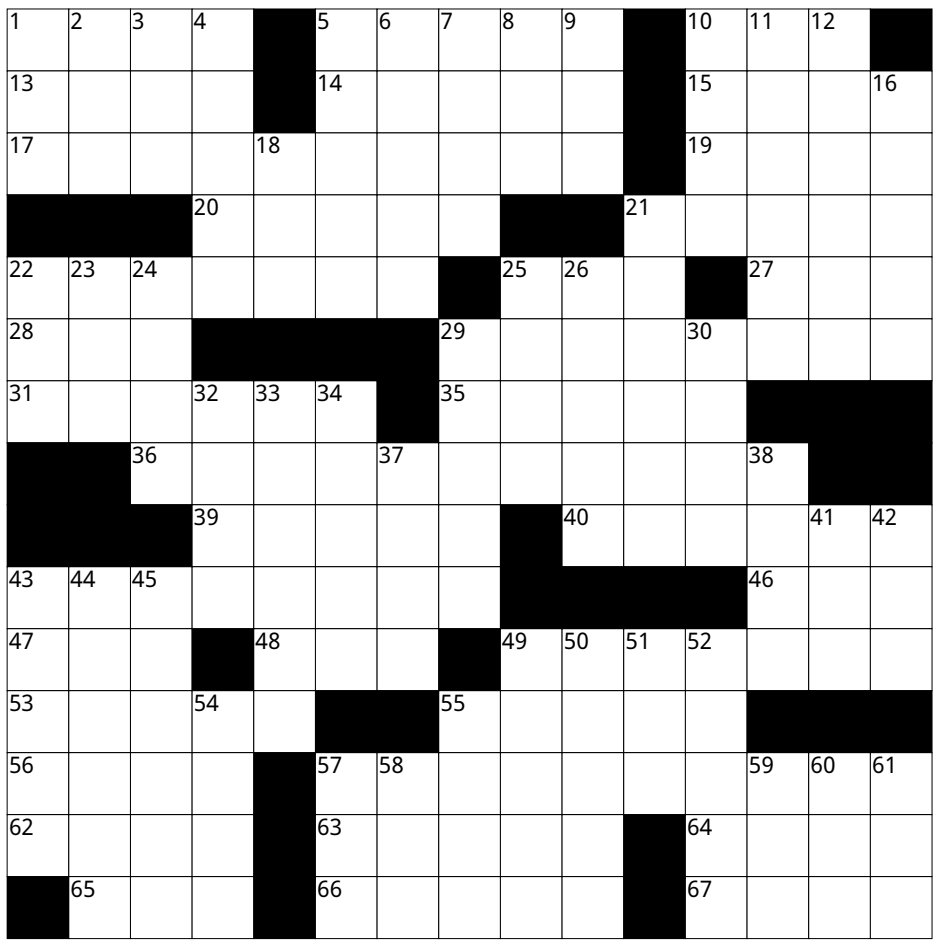
Succumb to the Darkness
Written for the Screen & Directed by
Robert Eggers
nosferatu
Bill Skarsgård Nicholas Hoult Lily-Rose Depp Aaron Taylor-Johnson Emma Corrin and Willem Dafoe
In Theaters This Christmas
IMAX

COURTESY PHOTO / PRANA FILM

The movie poster for Nosferatu, which was released in theaters on Dec. 25.

Jumping for Joy

Egan Turner



ACROSS
1 Curly hairdo
5 "Can't you take ___?"
10 Off-rd. transports which originally had 6 wheels
13 Mine was the first day of 63-Across
14 Covalent counterpart
15 Witty pun
17 "Kidding!"
19 Minor in astronomy?
20 Rotini shape
21 Holiday song
22 Responsive to change, in economics
25 JFK alternative
27 Time given a name
28 "Haha!", to a texter
29 Brazilian martial art
31 1.8288 meters
35 At a minimal setting
36 Singer dubbed the "Queen of Rock" by NPR
39 Trap for Dwight's stapler in "The Office"
40 Body headed by the Vice President
43 When not part of a familial trio, the lead singer of DNCE
46 19 mi. trail surrounding you, perhaps
47 Vessel for ashes
48 Class of 202X.5 member
49 Y'all?
53 Coffee option
55 LImerick rhyme scheme
56 Benj Pasek and Justin Paul are the two latest to hold this showbiz title
57 Smoothie chain
62 "___!" ("Me too!")
63 Wintertime at Midd., and an apt description of 17-Across, 29-Across, 36-Across, 43-Across, and 57-Across
64 Future atty.'s exam
65 ___ Perce National Historical Park
66 Yemen's capital
67 Instructed

DOWN
1 A 2002 study claimed the avg. American will eat 1,500 of these before graduating HS
2 University URL ending
3 There's a few of these ppl. in every dorm
4 Legendary stories
5 Sauce with mayonnaise base
6 3-time NBA MVP Nikola
7 Snakelike Pokémon that sounds like a black mineral
8 Next of ___
9 Heart test, briefly
10 Prefix for marine and culture
11 Castle feature
12 Golf accessories
16 Nation comprised of over 500 Pacific islands
18 Aaron Rodgers, for example
21 Persuade
22 2003 Will Ferrell film
23 Hawaii's Mauna ___
24 "Left Hand Free" band
25 Kitchen floor covering, in Britain
26 Downs
29 Siwa and Starbuck, for example
30 "Victory is mine!"
32 Pilgrimage to Mecca
33 Total fluke
34 Pooh creator
37 Flat piece of rock, wood, or meat
38 ___ "Mr. Popular" Bungus
41 Abstract art?
42 911 response org.
43 Law or Bellingham, for example
44 Salem state
45 Cipher or encrypt
49 Hummus brand
50 Former president who releases an annual "Summer Playlist"
51 Inits. shared by a president-first lady duo
52 Pole ___
54 Encompassing the alphabet, as this puzzle does
55 "Hear, hear!"
57 Abrams and Watt, for example (and the themed answers in this puzzle, I suppose)
58 "I'm ___ loss for words"
59 Prefix for metric
60 Orioles legend Ripken
61 25-Across posting, perhaps

PHOTOS OF THE WEEK

A glimpse of Dolci

Tate Sutter '24.5 captured these photos of the menu and food being plated at Dolci, Middlebury's student-run restaurant, on Jan. 10. The theme of this dinner was "Chemistry of Citrus" and served a plethora of delicious, citrusy dishes. Dolci hosts semi-regular dinners on Fridays in Atwater Dining Hall and tickets are distributed based on a lottery system. The organization announced this week that their next event will be the first ever Dolci breakfast.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TROUNCES TRINITY AND WESLEYAN TO CONTINUE A DOMINANT SEASON

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Callie Messina '26 dribbles the ball up the court.

The women's basketball team (12–3) emerged victorious this weekend with wins against NESCAC rivals Trinity College (11–4) and Wesleyan University (5–9).

On Friday, the Panthers started their strong weekend with a 65–52 victory over Trinity. Both teams played evenly throughout most of the game with the Bantams trailing by only two points as late as the third quarter. However, the Panthers took control in the fourth quarter, outscoring Trinity 27–16, cementing their victory with a 16–3 run.

Alexa Mustafaj '25 led the scoring for the Panthers, putting up 31 points in the game. Augusta Dixon '24.5 was also a crucial contributor, securing 11 points, four steals and 12 rebounds.

In Saturday's contest, the Panthers were able to decisively defeat Wesleyan 82–66. After a dominant 13–0 run in the second quarter, the Panthers went into halftime with a 12 point lead. Middlebury did not look back in the second half, extending their lead and securing a 16 point victory. Mustafaj once again led the team in scoring with 22 points. However, Calie Messina '26 had one of her best games of the season to help push the Panthers to victory. Messina recorded a season high of 20 points, along with six rebounds and six assists. Her prolific scoring came from her efficiency behind the three-point arc. She logged six three-pointers on just seven attempts.

These two wins are crucial as the Panthers enter the NESCAC portion of their schedule. So far, the Panthers are tied for first in the conference with a 2–0 record in NESCAC play. The team's success so far has come from a strong defense and impressive shooting. The team ranks third in the NESCAC for the fewest points allowed per game, averaging 54.3. Moreover, they have the third highest steals per game with 9.73. The team has excelled in shooting, boasting a three-point field goal percentage of .335, the second-highest in the NESCAC.

Another key factor in the Panthers' success has been the continued dominance of their star player, Alexa Mustafaj. After being named to the All-NESCAC First Team in her sophomore and junior seasons and becoming Middlebury's all-time leading scorer last year, Mustafaj has continued to play extraordinarily well. This season she broke another record, becoming the program's all-time leader in career free throws with 344 and leading the NESCAC with an average of 22.2 points per game

Mustafaj is backed by a formidable supporting cast. Dixon ranks 16th in the NESCAC in scoring with 11.1 points per game and second in rebounds per game with a 10.0 average. Meanwhile, Messina has played strong from beyond the arc, with a 50% shooting three-point shooting percentage and averaging 9.6 points per game.

The Panthers continue their season with an away game against Connecticut College (9–6) this Friday.

MEN'S HOCKEY ENTERING CRITICAL STRETCH OF NESCAC PLAY

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Reece Brednich '28 takes a shot on goal.

By ETHAN VASHEL
Staff Writer

The Middlebury men's hockey team has recently been busy as they begin a crucial stretch of their season.

This past weekend, the team lost to Trinity College 2–4 on Friday and beat Wesleyan University 5–4 on Saturday. The Panthers are now 6–6–0 with an impressive 5–1–0 record at home. Their Tuesday night game against Saint Michael's College wrapped up their three game homestand.

Middlebury's first tilt of the weekend was an unfortunate loss to #12 Trinity. Both teams struggled to find their footing, and between them, 21 penalties were called resulting in a choppy, odd game. Middlebury had two one-goal leads over the Bantams, including one with under 10 minutes to go. Dante Palombo '27 scored a go-ahead power play goal with just over 12 minutes remaining, which evaporated minutes later when Trinity's Chase McInnis tapped in a loose puck. With only 3:30 left in the game, James Barbour tucked a beautiful backhand shot past Andrew Heinze '27, allowing Trinity to escape Vermont with a win.

After an emotional loss the night before, the Panthers responded Saturday afternoon with a critical NESCAC victory over Wesleyan. On Middlebury's senior day, the Cardinals attempted to play spoiler and were well on their way with a 3–1 second period lead. Middlebury stayed the course though, and goals 14 seconds apart from Andrew Malatesta '25 and Jack Silverman '28 knotted the game at three. With 11:28 left in the game, Palumbo once again tallied a go-ahead goal for the Panthers. This time around, the lead stuck, as Reece Brednich '28 roped home his first career goal to pad Middlebury's lead and seal the win 5–4. Prior to Saturday's game, Middlebury honored seniors Drew Malatesta, Sam Amato, Tucker Lamb, Jin Lee, Matt Myers, Jake Oblak, Wyatt Pastor, Ryan Pineault and Andrew Seaman. Captain Jin Lee '25 acknowledged the collective leadership displayed by his fellow classmates, speaking of how their commitment to the team has set a standard for the younger players.

Speaking of youth, Middlebury has had a plethora of underclassmen play critical roles so far this season. In fact, five of Middlebury's top seven point leaders are either freshmen or sophomores. Revy Mack '27 leads the pack, averaging a point per game with 12 points in five games. Furthermore, starting goalie Andrew Heinze '27 has been a calming presence in net for the Panthers. He has a 6–4–0 record, and his .91 save percentage places him third best in the league for goalies with over eight starts. Despite this being his first year as the starter, Heinze has brought great stability for Middlebury at hockey's most important position.

Middlebury is now 3–5–0 in NESCAC play, the record that matters most for postseason qualification. The Panthers' record places them seventh out of ten teams in the NESCAC standings with the critical stretch of their season on the horizon as the top eight NESCAC teams make the playoffs. After a Friday non-conference match with Plattsburgh State, they will run the gauntlet with 10 consecutive NESCAC games to finish off the season — Lee and the Panthers are feeling confident heading into this stretch. They matched up well against perennial powerhouse Trinity, gutted out a tricky game with Wesleyan, have had success in non-conference games and have a growing internal confidence within their own locker room. They will also receive one of their more valuable defensemen, John Burdett '26, back from an upper body injury in the very near future.

The Panthers continue their season this Friday with an away game against Plattsburgh State.

Editor's Note: This article was written prior to Middlebury's Tuesday 1/14 game against Saint Michael's College.

Squash teams build momentum through demanding games on the road

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Gabe Feinstein '28 hits a ball up the court.

By TING CUI
Sports Editor

From Carlisle, Pa. to Annapolis, Md. and back north to Lancaster, Pa., the Middlebury squash teams emerged from an intense three-match weekend with momentum-building victories.

The 20th ranked men's team (6–2) opened their weekend with a commanding 7–2 victory over #28 Dickinson, with five Panthers sweeping their matches 3–0. Building on this momentum, the team earned edged out longtime rival #16 Navy 5–4 on Saturday in a match that came down to the thrilling five-set victory of co-captain Alexis Ballo '25.

"The cadets really bring a serious environment to the facility, and it's a big away match, especially for the underclassmen who have never been there," said men's co-captain Nathan Feinstein '25.

Three underclassmen emerged victorious in their first experience at the Naval Academy.

"To reach our goals of both top 16 and hopefully top 12, that was a must-win match," Feinstein added. "It was really awesome for the team, definitely the first real quality win of the season."

Though they fell 8–1 to #13 Franklin and Marshall on Sunday, with first year Aditya Kothari '28 securing the lone point, the weekend's overall success keeps the Panthers on track.

The #16 women's team (6–2) bookended their demanding weekend with impressive victories. The Panthers opened with a strong 7–2 victory over #21 Dickinson and closed with their fifth shutout of the season against #24 Franklin and Marshall (9–0). The middle match on Saturday brought a challenging 8–1 loss to #13 Georgetown, though sophomore Mariana Reedich '27 fought through for a decisive 3–0 victory.

"We were all bummed, but just for a second, and then we kind of rallied," Izzy Ronda '26 said. "For upcoming matches, the goal is to just relax a bit more and not focus so much on the results but more on playing individual matches well."

The Panthers' road success was built on methodical preparation that began in mid-September, when team captains led voluntary practices before official coaching sessions commenced in October. Both teams returned to campus on New Year's Day, immediately diving into three consecutive days of double practices. The intensive training schedule intentionally simulates their three-match weekends, combining match play, technical work and solo drilling.

"It's interesting making the switch between preseason and in-season," Ronda said. "We're not lifting anymore. It's much more focused on match play and drilling."

Fresh off their Pennsylvania-Maryland swing, both teams now continue their busy January schedule and turn their attention to Maine, where they'll face NESCAC rivals Bates College, Bowdoin College and Colby College in another three-match weekend. For the 20th-ranked men's team, the Maine trip represents another opportunity to climb the national rankings.

"We take it one match at a time," Feinstein said. "We play Bates first, so that's where our focus is. Once we get through the Bates match Friday night, we'll regroup and worry about Bowdoin."

While the team has its sights set on the top 16 nationally, Feinstein remains measured but confident.

"We don't want to put too much pressure on ourselves, but if we're being honest, we expect to beat a number of teams currently ranked ahead of us," he said. "We know what we're capable of, and we don't want to shy away from that."

With nationals approaching in March, both teams are building momentum for tournament success. The championship format features multiple 12-team brackets, with the top-ranked teams competing in Bracket A, the next tier in Bracket B and subsequent tiers following. Currently positioned in Bracket B, the women's team is seeking redemption after last year's semi-final exit and has their sights set on qualifying to the bracket final. Meanwhile, the men's team is focused on placing in the top 16 in rankings, with the long-term goal of reaching the top 12 to qualify for Bracket A — though for now, they remain focused on the matches at hand.

Family ties run deep within the program, bringing a unique dynamic that strengthens the program's already close-knit culture. The women's team features two sets of sisters — Madeline and Sabrina Schwarz '27 and Izzy and Lucy Ronda '28 – with a brother pair – Nathan Feinstein '25 and Gabe Feinstein '28 – on the men's side.

"I never played on a squash team before getting to Middlebury," Ronda reflected. "It's been so nice over the years to learn that even if I individually lose my match on the ladder, if my team has won, I could not care less."

The women's team nurtures these bonds through group dinners and movie nights in hotel rooms to stretching circles while traveling for matches. "Middlebury squash always had a great culture, but I think that this year, particularly, it just feels very close and comfortable," Ronda said.

Team unity is equally central to the men's program, beginning each season with their signature pre-orientation training camp.

"This year, we hosted the entire team in Pittsburgh for four days of intensive training," Feinstein said. "Getting our freshmen together with the squad before school starts has become a cornerstone of our program – it really kicks off our season and builds those early connections." This emphasis on relationship-building continues throughout the year with the co-captains working to build strong bonds off the court."

Fans can rally behind both teams during J-term when they face off against rival Tufts on Saturday, Jan. 25. The highly anticipated matchup – the program's only home match during winter term – begins at 1 p.m. at Middlebury's Bostwick Family Squash Center, where strong fan support could help propel both squads to victory against their longtime competitors.

Editor's Note: Izzy Ronda '26 is a Local Editor for The Campus.

COURTESY PHOTO / AANVI ANAND

The men's squash team huddles up during a recent match.

Painting Professionals: A conversation with Brian Cirmo

By JUNE SU
Senior Multimedia Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / BRIAN CIRMO

Brian Cirmo with his paintings.

The best part of taking classes in studio art is the opportunity to talk with professional artists: to pick their brains apart and learn about their artistic philosophy in a career which requires extraordinary psychological determination. I had the chance to sit down and speak with Brian Cirmo, an internationally exhibited artist running the J-Term course "Painting in Oil," which focuses on his medium of choice. Clearly past the point of treating art as a "hobby," Cirmo has deservedly won the recognition and career stability which few artists enjoy.

Through his Zoom camera, Cirmo gave me a tour of his studio in Albany, NY: a modestly sized room in his home. Brushes neatly line the corner next to his current work in progress. A broad shelf lined to the brim with records and books loomed over the room.

When I asked about his inspirations, Cirmo immediately described the moment he heard Bob Dylan's "Hurricane" in the film "Dazed and Confused." What was an average day at the theater his junior year of high school became a crucial juncture of cultural discovery.

"I was just hooked, because [Hurricane] is about an actual person, a boxer named Reuben Carter, a black man who was falsely accused of murder and imprisoned... And I knew nothing about this. All I knew was [Dylan] was singing the song and telling this story. I'd never heard a song like that before — it was like a film. The next day, I went to the record store, and I bought that record, and that was it. His music became the hub of my whole kind of creative endeavor."

Dylan's expert storytelling immediately found its way into Cirmo's work. When you look at Cirmo's compositions, you almost feel as though you have flipped to an illustrated page in a book, or are paused on a particular scene in a movie. The framing of painted elements, with expansive, simplified shapes, invites the viewer to focus on the characters Cirmo has created.

"For me, when I started looking at painting, I got the same kind of sensation I would get when I heard that Dylan song or when I watched a film or read a novel," he said.

The carefully crafted simplicity of Cirmo's paintings evoke this sense of comradery and familiarity with his subjects. A man donning a Boston Bruins shirt rests his heavy head in his hand, solemnly gazing downwards while sitting on a park bench. Dejected smokers, who look more like the kind of people you'd bump into at a gas station at 1 a.m. rather than the subject of an oil painting, strain under the weight of their exhaustion and eye bags.

"My characters are like the every-person character. They're not 'interesting' in the traditional sense. They are like anti-heroes, in a sense. I think they're all vulnerable in some way. Those kinds of attitudes come from the people my family and the people I grew up around."

Cirmo also shared about his working-class background, which contextualizes the scale of his discovery of Bob Dylan. As a kid, he had little exposure to art and history.

"My mom was just constantly working, just to kind of keep things afloat. My brother and I were very close in age, so we just kind of hung out outside, played with local friends, and played sports. I never looked at painting when I was a kid. I never really went to plays or concerts or museums," Cirmo said.

He lamented that he had felt behind by the time he attended college due to his sparse experience in art. He was a C student in high school with little ambition until he discovered art-making. Despite this perceived inadequacy, he recounts this time with absolute confidence in his future trajectory as an artist.

After he finished his Bachelors in Fine Arts, he received a full scholarship to graduate school for fine arts in Upstate New York. When he could no longer sustain his painting practice — or his livelihood — from just his savings, Cirmo worked several jobs at once to continue what was most important to him.

"I taught two or three or four classes, sometimes at two or three different local colleges. I worked the midnight to 8 a.m. shift at security dispatch for one of the colleges. In between those I slept and worked in my studio, which was my kitchen. It became a routine and as long as I could make the paintings, everything else was okay."

As a full time student, my day to day is full of excuses of why I am too busy to pursue art. I was astounded at Cirmo's work ethic and fortitude — his intense clarity of trajectory and present action seems to decisively defeat any overthinking. Cirmo told The Campus that after 15 years of this grueling routine and reaching exhaustion and career burnout, he began seriously applying to full-time positions.

"So I would sit at my job from midnight to 8 a.m. at my desk, and I would apply to exhibitions for grants, for residencies and for teaching positions. Little by little, I get a show here, I get a show there... Ultimately [I] got a full time teaching position out in Syracuse."

I was again curious about his psychological approach to these extremely competitive applications. The veteran painter offered simple insight, treating my constant existential mullings on the feasibility of becoming a professional artist and responded plainly:

"The rejections are endless. But I was dedicated because I knew this is what I wanted to do. I knew that the work I was making was getting better and better, even though no one wanted to show it. You know, I wasn't getting tons of shows."

Of course. Brooding to and fro on whether I should or should not pursue art seriously only takes time away from actually furthering my skills, building my portfolio and even making such a career path a possibility.

Cirmo's words struck a chord in me about disregarding external validation. There is only one thing you can rely on if you want to pursue art: internally derived validation and security in your own inspirations and vision.

"And I just knew that it was a stamina game. It's not about who's the most talented, skillful artist. It really is how dedicated you are to this life, in this process of being a creative person, being an artist," he explained.

Check out more of Cirmo's work on https://briancirmo.com/home.html and on his instagram @b_cirmo. He teaches at Pratt Munson in Utica, N.Y.

COURTESY PHOTO / BRIAN CIRMO

Smokers, Oil on canvas, 55" x 75," 2021.

COURTESY PHOTO / BRIAN CIRMO

Rabbit Thoughts, Oil on canvas, 50" x 50," 2022.

COURTESY PHOTO / BRIAN CIRMO

Loom, Oil on Canvas, 52 × 80 in, 2018.